

## **WISCONSIN BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STUDY PROGRAM (WIBRES)**

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce recognizes that Wisconsin's economy is a reflection of the business climate within each urban and rural community in the state. While new business attraction can stimulate economic growth, the retention and expansion of existing businesses is vital to maintaining and growing a community and ultimately the state. In order to aid in strengthening economic development in Wisconsin, Commerce provides communities with a survey tool to determine factors that affect business retention and expansion locally. The program is currently offered free of charge to all qualifying communities in Wisconsin.

### **The Tool - WIBRES:**

The Wisconsin Business Retention and Expansion Study program (WIBRES) recommends a process that combines a site visit with our strategically designed survey instrument to collect information from chief executive officers on the local business climate. The survey questionnaire, available electronically as well as the traditional paper copy method, covers the following categories:

- I. History and status of present location
- II. Nature of the business
- III. Physical plant specifications
- IV. Markets and customers
- V. Competitors
- VI. Future plans
- VII. Labor and manpower
- VIII. Assessment of government relations, regulations, and services in the area
- IX. Financial conditions
- X. Energy costs and supplies
- XI. Community linkage
- XII. Overall impressions

In addition to the survey questionnaire provided by Commerce, communities may wish to collect data to examine community specific issues. Commerce will design an addendum questionnaire for this purpose and provide a summary of the data collected.

### **Program Objectives:**

The purpose of the WIBRES program is to help communities develop a systematic approach to business retention and expansion efforts. Identifying the needs of area business is the first step to being responsive. The program provides an opportunity to:

- Gain an understanding of the business community's view of the local economy
- Determine future expansion/relocation plans of companies in order to set up an early warning system for local action
- Acquaint business executives with assistance available through various economic development programs
- Improve the communications bridge and strengthen relationships between local/county government and the business community
- Identify specific concerns and problems of the local businesses and provide swift, effective solutions

## Survey Results:

Following data analysis, Commerce provides a print-ready written report with chart illustrations. The report includes comparisons to statewide composite findings allowing the community to examine its business development situation in relation to others in the state. Comparisons to previous WIBRES studies conducted in the community (within a reasonable timeframe) are also included in the report to demonstrate change in the local business climate. A slide presentation of the survey findings is also prepared and presented to the community.

## Where Studies Can Be Conducted:

- Individual community - involving a minimum of 25 businesses/companies
- Area - more than one community, but not the entire county
- County - county businesses/companies
- Composite area – several, separate community studies combined to provide county/regional data

Economic development specialists may choose to have their community survey focus on a specific business segment or all business types in the area providing a snapshot of the area's business climate in general.

## What the Study Will Cost:

Commerce will cover costs associated with staffing and compiling the survey report. Eligible costs include instruction, data analysis, comparison to statewide composite figures, a written report and a slide presentation to demonstrate survey findings.

The community will be responsible for the following costs: stationery and postage for correspondence with businesses, personnel to enter data into a user-friendly system (provided by Commerce), printing of additional reports, and costs associated with the presentation, i.e., meeting space, refreshments and invitations (optional).

## Procedure:

Commerce will coordinate studies through the Area Development Managers (ADMs). We will provide a project guide to walk community project managers through the study process and MS Word files of correspondence documents (press releases, introductory letters, thank you letters, etc.) to ease your clerical efforts.

## Who Qualifies:

Communities must demonstrate the desire to aggressively complete the survey; a commitment to follow through on trouble areas that surface from the study; and an interest in developing strategies for business retention and expansion based on the study results.

## For information on conducting the Wisconsin Business Retention and Expansion Study in your area contact your Area Development Manager:

Region 1: Marty Ambros	(715) 836-2630
Region 2: Deb Clements	(715) 344-1381
Region 3: Dennis Russell	(920) 498-6302
Region 4: William Winter	(608) 647-4613
Region 5: Kathy Hedy	(608) 266-9944
Region 6: Dave Martens	(608) 267-2250
WIBRES program manager:	
Geri Petersen	(414) 220-5369

Commerce Home Page: [www.commerce.state.wi.us](http://www.commerce.state.wi.us)

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